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## SALT, Soviet-Style

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Three "distinctly new" test silos for "modernized" Soviet long-range missiles are now receiving final preparations at Soviet test ranges, a piece of intelligence that could doom continuation of SALT as a game that runs so heavily in the Kremlin's favor.

No longer in question is the clarity of intelligence demonstrating Moscow's intent to trigger a huge new test program the instant the new Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT II) is ratified. It seems likely to harden American public opinion against what has come to be called the SALT "process."

"This may well prove to be the end of the SALT process," says a Nixon-Ford administration official, who was one of the original authors of SALT II and who supports the final version. "When our people read about what Moscow is legally doing under this new treaty, they may say to hell with SALT."

Students of SALT, mostly critics but also including important supporters, long have been concerned that the "process" of SALT, replacing substance, has become the political objective. The impending Soviet test program could stop this dangerous inversion by concentrating public attention on substance.

During the period of intense Soviet testing following SALT I, the United States still had strategic superiority. In contrast, the United States today is on the verge of losing, if it has not already lost, strategic parity. That points to outrage as the public watches four free years of testing for Moscow, while the United States fails to test a single new intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM).

Preparations of the new test silos to let Moscow exploit Article 4 of SALT II are virtually complete. High Pentagon officials are privately warning senators and other politicians not to be surprised when "modernized" (improved) versions of the main Soviet ICBM force are tested immediately following final ratification of the new treaty.

One defense official made that clear last week to a meeting attended by Senate staff experts: U.S. negotiators of SALT II "know that the Russians delib-

erately negotiated Article 4 so that they could go ahead and test and deploy all their new missiles without violating the treaty."

This Soviet upgrading or modernization of the existing force is a loophole totally separate from the provision in the treaty (Article 2) that gives each side the right to build one new missile. President Carter has announced a decision (still resisted by arms-control enthusiasts) for the United States to build the MX mobile missile as its new missile.

The United States has no plans for upgrading or modernizing its present land-based missile force. There is today no intention to fire a single test of any long-range missile until the MX itself is fired (now scheduled for 1983).

That means silence from the Americans amid heavy Russian missile-rattling. The Soviet Union, without cheating, is in the same position to modernize its land-based long-range missiles as it was after ratification of SALT I on Sept. 14, 1972. Immediately thereafter, the Soviets began initial tests of the huge SS18 and the large SS19, whose size did violent injustice to the spirit of SALT I. Now, both the SS18 and the SS19 will be modernized under SALT II, along with three lesser missiles.

Skeptics within the U.S. SALT delegation sounded repeated warnings during the negotiations that Article 4 must not leave the "modernizing" door wide open. One result was to limit the modernized missiles to a 5 percent variation from the older missiles (which the Soviets can easily violate).

Moscow's negotiators never have been willing to give the United States accurate measurements of its existing missiles from which to measure the permitted 5 percent variations. Indeed, the "modernizing door" was left open, as the intelligence reports of the new silos at Soviet test sites prove.

That sets the stage for public outcry as soon as the new Soviet tests are launched. It could mark the end of innocence that up to now has made the SALT process a self-contained objective even more important than the SALT substance.